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DEPARTMENT OF NURSING EDUCATION

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THE TEACHING OF DIETETICS TO STUDENT NURSES

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

DIETETICS has always been one of the most important subjects in the nursing school curriculum, but with the recent strides in nutrition and in the dietetic treatment of disease, it must necessarily take a much larger place in the preparation of the student nurse. Without a thorough, up-to-date course in dietetics, nurses nowadays find themselves seriously handicapped in public health work and in other branches of nursing.

Reports from nursing schools throughout the country and the results of state examinations for a number of years have shown that dietetics is one of the weakest subjects in nursing schools. There are many reasons for this, among them lack of sufficient time, adequate equipment, good text-books, and trained teachers. But the main reason is that few of us seem to have given the subject the careful thought and study it demands. We have been content to go on with the same old cookery outline and the same teaching methods which we started with years ago, forgetting that the whole subject has been growing rapidly and that the emphasis has changed greatly in the past few years, both in subject matter and in method.

Dietitians as well as nurses are responsible for whatever failure there has been to galvanize this vital subject into life. The American Dietetic Association has shown its interest by appointing a sub-committee of its Committee on Education, to coöperate with the Education Committee of the League of Nursing Education in working out a more satisfactory outline for the teaching of dietetics to nurses. The report which follows is only a preliminary study to be supplemented later by a fuller outline of typical classes or lessons now being worked out by the members of the Dietetic Association—also lists of illustrative material, text and reference books, etc., for the use of both teachers and students.

The committee invites suggestions and criticisms from all those interested in the better teaching of this subject. The members of the sub-committee are:

Lenna Cooper, Battle Creek Sanitarium, Battle Creek, Michigan.

Charlotte Addison, Post-Graduate Hospital, New York.

Isabel M. Stewart, Department of Nursing and Health, Teachers

College, New York, (Chairman Education Committee of the National League of Nursing Education).

Chairman, Katharine A. Fisher, Department of Household Administration, Teachers College, New York.

OUTLINE OF A COURSE OF STUDY IN DIETETICS FOR STUDENT NURSES

PRELIMINARY COURSE

Time

This course should be given during the preliminary period of training. A minimum of 60 hours of lecture and laboratory work is recommended; laboratory periods should be at least two hours in length.

Instructor

The class should be conducted by a dietitian who is a graduate in household science from a recognized school.

Preparation of Class

It is assumed that the students are of high school grade. Exemption from the course should be granted to those students considered by the superintendent of nurses and the dietitian to have had the equivalent of the work given. An examination should determine such exemption, and all students should be required to take any work directly relating to cookery for the sick which was not included in their previous training.

Laboratory Equipment

A laboratory is essential, with facilities for individual laboratory work. Not more than sixteen students can be handled satisfactorily by one teacher in one laboratory section. Illustrative material, such as charts, slides and exhibits should be supplied and freely used.

Aims of Course

1. To give students a sound fundamental understanding of the principles and methods of cookery for well and sick people.
2. To make them familiar with the nutritive values of food and with the essentials of well balanced daily meals for well people and convalescents under varying conditions.
3. To help the students to thoroughly appreciate the economic aspects of food, such as selection, relative costs and control of waste.
4. To give a training in high standards of cleanliness and sanitation in the care, preparation and service of food.
5. To give practice in the planning of well balanced, attractive and suitable menus, and a training in the efficient preparation of these.
6. To demonstrate and maintain dainty and artistic service of food.

Methods of Teaching

1. Some instructors may wish to separate the lectures from the laboratory periods. If this scheme is followed, it is thought that fifteen one-hour lecture periods should be planned within the minimum time recommended above. The most satisfactory method, however, is the combination of lecture and demonstration by the instructor, followed by laboratory practice, investigation and discussion by the students. The students have thus a chance to directly connect, under supervision, the general principles with their methods in laboratory practice.

2. Instructors should remember that their students are nurses in training and not students specializing in home economics. Only that material, therefore, which the nurse will use during her training and in her professional work later, should find a place in the course, and it should, of course, be presented with a view to constantly holding her active interest. "Fancy Cookery" as such has no place in this course. Dainty and effective garnishes should be taught and interesting variations from the typical dishes considered, but dishes involving much time and elaborate arrangement of ingredients should be excluded.

3. The introductory lessons should bring the students in immediate touch with the actual work of food preparation instead of being entirely devoted to the less interesting phases of laboratory practice, such as a study of equipment and fuels, and it is not desirable to devote the greater part of these first lessons to the theoretical side of the subject. The students should think in terms of the daily food service to patients on all kinds of diet, and it is considered wise to base as many of the lessons as possible on the preparation of an entire meal and the setting up of trays. This plan gives the students practice in applying their knowledge of food values to the planning of the day's diets and the instructor an opportunity to bring to the attention of the class concrete examples in diet and the problems to be met in planning attractive, palatable and well balanced menus. Problems representing suitable meals for persons under specific conditions, such as meals for children of different ages, for adolescents, for adults and the aged, should be worked out by the class instead of asking them to consider isolated masses of facts concerning food values and food preparation. Methods of cooking should be studied as they are first used and later a summary and comparison made of the various methods, as to their effect on the flavor and digestibility of food.

4. In conducting classes the instructor should lay the emphasis on the reasons for following the various methods, on "why" as well as

on "how" and "what." This will keep live questions constantly before the students, making them stronger in technique, more resourceful, and capable of thinking independently in this field. In all review work questions given to the class should reflect this more desirable method of teaching, and it is of the greatest importance that the actual needs of the nurse in her later professional work should be given the closest attention.

5. Standard or basic recipes should be used freely and the students instructed in varying these as necessary. This should give them a knowledge of general principles and of proportions in food combinations and eliminate the memorizing of recipes, a practice which cannot be condemned too strongly. For example, using as a basis the standard recipe for cream sauce, a cheese sauce for macaroni may be made and the various cream soups prepared. General principles of cooking the various typical groups of food should be stressed in the laboratory work.

6. Students should be trained in the critical judgment of the finished dishes and of the meals prepared and served. There should be constant comparison of class results by the instructor and students and for this they may work out score cards. For example, a *baked custard* may be scored on this basis:

| | Possible score | Actual score |
|--|----------------|--------------|
| Appearance ----- | 1 | |
| Consistency ----- | 2 | |
| Texture ----- | 4 | |
| Flavor ----- | 3 | |
| <i>Or a tray as follows:</i> | | |
| Service ----- | 3 | |
| Immaculate service ----- | 1 | |
| Artistic arrangement ----- | 1 | |
| Convenience for patient ----- | 1 | |
| Menu ----- | 7 | |
| Suitability to patient's condition ---- | 2 | |
| Combination of foods ----- | 2 | |
| Palatability and digestibility of foods -- | 3 | |

7. Class notes should not be voluminous. They may be conveniently arranged on cards, indexed for reference purposes, and should be carefully corrected by the instructor. A good text-book and suitable reference books relieve students from much note-taking, but at present there appear to be few suitable books of this kind for student nurses. Some are, for the most part, a collection of recipes, while others pay too much attention to specific methods and specific information, with inadequate attention to general principles. The

material presented is not always well adapted to the average general educational preparation of the class and to their vocational needs.

8. The attention of students should be frequently drawn to the various ways in which this work is related to nursing education and opportunities for applying this part of their training as students in the hospital and later in their professional work. The growing tendency, in medicine and nursing, to pay more attention to the dietetic treatment of disease should receive full consideration.

9. The social and economic aspects of the food problem should also be kept before the class. Many of these nurses will be working later with poorer families and will be expected to advise them about the choice and the relative costs of standard foods.

10. The instructor should keep closely in touch with the other preliminary courses most directly related to the work in dietetics, so that she may know how to correlate her work with these to the very best advantage. Instructors should also keep in touch with the latest developments in nutritional work and familiarize the students with the various sources through which they may keep their knowledge up to date.

11. The principles of physical science should be woven into the course in a popular way, to give the reasons for certain procedures in cookery which other courses in the preliminary work do not cover.

12. The content of a course in dietetics for nurses has already received much thought, but the methods of teaching have not been given adequate attention. Students are therefore not always well prepared to use this training to the best advantage.

Content of Course

(These subjects are not arranged in the sequence in which they would be presented in a course of study, nor are they divided into lessons. Such an outline will be submitted later, following the suggestions discussed above.)

1. Review of the physiology of digestion, absorption, assimilation and excretion.
2. Classification of foods and food products under typical food groups according to their place in the diet and to their economic value, as for example:
 - A. *Milk*—important as a source of energy, protein, lime, and vitamins, unique as sufficient in growth-promoting food. Study of grades of milk.
 - B. *Cereals and cereal foods*—economical source of protein, but not well balanced in salts and vitamins; typical starchy foods.
 - C. *Vegetables and fruits*—varying greatly as sources of energy, but rich in vitamins.

- D. Typical *protein foods* and food products:
- (a) Meat, fish and poultry—generally popular, but expensive as sources of protein and fat. Poor in lime and in vitamins.
 - (b) Eggs—rich in protein, salts and vitamins; value in the dietary depends much on market conditions
 - (c) Cheese—valuable as a meat substitute in concentrated form.
 - (d) Nuts—rich in protein and fat; valuable as a meat substitute.
3. Food values and their measurement; practice in computing food values.
4. Composition and food value of the different foods; specific functions of
- | | |
|------------------|-------------|
| A. Proteins | D. Salts |
| B. Fats | E. Vitamins |
| C. Carbohydrates | F. Water |
5. Factors in food requirement such as age, climate, activity, size, etc.; consideration of suitable diets for persons under these varying conditions.
6. The preparation of foods:—
- A. Selection, cooking and serving of the typical protein and carbohydrate foods and of the fats and oils:
- (a) *Fruits and vegetables*—dried and fresh, greens and legumes.
 - (b) *Cereals and cereal foods*—including gruels, breakfast cereals, macaroni and rice. Comparison of ready-to-serve and home-cooked cereals as to cost and food value.
 - (c) *Eggs, milk and milk products*, including sterilization and pasteurization of milk.
 - (d) *Fish*—baked, boiled and broiled fish; shell fish.
 - (e) *Meat and poultry*—broiled chops and steaks, squabs and chicken; broths and beef juice.
 - (f) *Fats and oils*—their use in cookery; commercial preparations.
- B. Preparation of the typical food combinations:
- (a) *Beverages*—including albumenized drinks, and milk and egg drinks.
 - (b) *Thickened liquids*—the use of the prepared starches, especially cornstarch and flour, in making cream soups, purees, sauces and desserts; basic recipes for these dishes with practice in varying them as

to thickness, flavor and ingredients; method of using eggs with the starches in thickening liquids.

- (c) *Flour mixtures*—study of lightening agents; basic recipes for biscuits, muffins and plain cake, with methods for simple variations; sponge cake.
- (d) *Salads*—illustrating the serving of different foods and suitable combinations of these; salad dressings.
- (e) *Gelatine dishes*—basic recipes for the plain jellies, sponges and creams, with the simple variations.
- (f) *Frozen dishes*—types and their variations; freezing small quantities.
- (g) *Food sanitation*—handling and care of food, especially of milk; care of kitchen utensils and equipment; brief study of the sanitary aspects of commercial food distribution and preservation.
- (h) *Methods of cooking*—their effect upon the digestibility and flavor of food.
- (i) Use and abuse of condiments.
- (j) *Hospital diets*—use of liquid, light and full diet, with general procedure in feeding the sick.

Practical Work in the Diet Kitchen

1. It is coming to be generally recognized that the diet kitchen is a laboratory where the student nurse may apply her technical knowledge and where she may develop a fair degree of skill in preparing food for the sick. The student is there to be taught and must not be thought of simply as a means of getting the work done.
2. The duties of the student nurses in the diet kitchen should not involve any needless repetition, and their services should not be used for the routine of dishwashing and other cleaning, or for much preparatory work, such as paring vegetables, washing greens, etc. Maids should be employed for this purpose.
3. It is desirable that the students should have some of their diet kitchen experience during their preparatory course or soon after, so that they may apply at once the elementary principles and procedures outlined above. This period should be for at least three or four weeks, the time of each student being carefully organized so that she may have practice in the preparation of all typical dishes included in above outline. This should prepare her to assist in the preparation and serving of the simpler ward diets.
4. Later when she has had more opportunity to study different types of disease and to care for more complicated cases, she will take

up the preparation of special diets and formulae for infant feedings as outlined in the more advanced course below.

DIETOTHERAPY

A COURSE OF STUDY IN DIETOTHERAPY FOR STUDENT NURSES

Time

A minimum of 20 hours is recommended, or 30 hours if infant feeding is included.

It is thought advisable that this course should be given as soon as possible after the preliminary training and, if arrangements can be made, to have the students receive this instruction during the time they are taking their training in medical nursing, they will be able to use their knowledge to the best advantage.

Instructors

The dietitian should be a graduate of a recognized school, fully qualified to meet the requirements of special hospital dietary work.

The medical phases of the subject may be given by a physician who is a specialist in this field.

Aims of Course

1. To apply the principles of cookery and of nutrition to the dietetic treatment of nutritional disorders.
2. To teach the students how to fill doctors' dietary prescriptions and to make attractive menus and palatable meals from these.
3. To teach the students how patients may be led to understand the purpose of their dietetic treatment in order that they may coöperate more fully with the physician and nurse.
4. To study the charting of diets on history sheets.

Methods of Teaching

As the student nurse will have an opportunity for practice in preparation of diets in the diet kitchen, it is thought that less than half the time devoted to this course should be given to laboratory practice. As each type of diet is being considered, trays, demonstrating suitable menus, should be prepared and used as a basis for lectures and for discussions by the students.

Content of Course

1. Principles in the dietetic treatment of disease, with special reference to diseases of metabolism, and other conditions requiring special diets.
2. A study of the various types of diets as they are used in treating various diseases, using each as a basis for planning attractive menus and preparing palatable meals for patients:

- | | |
|--|--|
| A. Starch free diet | G. High calorie diet |
| B. Fat low diet | H. Diets with roughage |
| C. Protein low diet | I. Diets as free from roughage as possible |
| D. Purin free diet | J. Various combinations of above diets |
| E. Salt free diet | |
| F. Diet with restricted or forced fluids | |
3. Practice in filling dietary prescriptions, computing calorie values of special diets when necessary, and charting.
 4. Infant feeding—modified milk and doctors' formulae—technique of milk room, such as care of feeding bottles, use of Babcock tester, etc.

Practical Work in the Wards and Diet Kitchen

1. When the student nurse is experienced enough to be assigned to the position of chief diet nurse in the medical or surgical wards, it is desirable that her time should be divided, if possible, between the wards and diet kitchen, in order that she may study the patients' individual needs, prepare under supervision the diets for the special cases, and follow closely the effects which are produced by the treatment.
2. In the same way, her service in the milk room should, if at all possible, be a part of her service in the children's wards, so that she may know the condition of the babies and watch from day to day the results of the formulae they are getting.
3. As an instructor of nurses, the dietitian or her assistants should, through visits to the wards, keep closely in touch with the diet work of the student nurses there. In the larger hospitals where the dietitian has charge of the administration of the dietary work throughout the entire hospital, she should, of course, have adequate assistance for the supervision of the work of the diet kitchen and for the training of student nurses. Here also the pupil dietitians should get their training in supervising special diet work.¹

Post-graduate Work

Special problems of food and nutrition in public health work and in institutional administration should be considered as post-graduate study. The social service dietitian is best qualified to give instruction in the former, and the administrative dietitian in the latter. Nurses who wish to specialize in metabolic work should also plan to take post-graduate training.

¹ This means not more than three or four hours' practical work daily if the period comes during the preparatory term or an equivalent number of hours if following the preparatory course.